

CALL TO ORDER	<p>The one-hundred thirty-sixth meeting of the Water and Wastewater Operator's Advisory Council (Council) was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Carol Reifschneider, Ph.D., MSU-Northern, Council Chairperson. Other Council members present included: Joanne "Joni" Hall Emrick, Kalispell; Council Vice Chair; Leland "Lee" Leivo, Bigfork; Steve Ruhd, Conrad; and Jim Melstad, DEQ Public Water Supply Section.</p> <p>Department personnel attending all or portions of the meeting were Jenny Chambers, Certification Officer; Reta Therriault, Certification Technician; Ashley Eichhorn, Certification Technician; Ruby Miller, Reimbursement Grant Accountant Technician; John Camden, Field Services Program Manager; and Scott Anderson, Anderson-Montgomery Consulting Engineers also attended.</p>
MINUTES APPROVED	<p>The minutes from the previously held meeting on November 21, 2002 were unanimously approved following a motion by Steve and a second by Joni.</p>
COUNCIL MEMBERS STATUS REPORT	<p>Carol announced that Lee Leivo indicated that he will officially retire from the City of Bigfork effective the end of June. Lee stated that he still had other career opportunities that he is currently pursuing and would advise the council regarding his status on the council. Carol announced that Bob Cottom indicated in an e-mail to Jenny Chambers that his term ends October, 16, 2003 and that he wishes to step down from the council.</p>
CECRC UPDATE	<p>Carol informed the council that the Continuing Education Credit Review Committee held their meeting on May, 21, 2002. During this meeting, several Alternative Training Courses were approved. The Alternative Training Courses varied and included correspondence courses, CD-Rom training (Montana Water Center), and a video based training series from California State University. Only one Alternative Training Course was not approved due to the ambiguity of the training hours indicated on the request form.</p>
POINT OF CONTACT CHART	<p>Copies of the Council's point-of-contact list were distributed and corrections were noted. Joni indicated that her e-mail address has changed, Lee provided a new cell phone number, and Steve provided a new cell phone number. The update of the Council's point-of-contact list will be added to the action item list for this meeting.</p>

USEPA ANNUAL
REPORT

Jenny Chambers reported that the USEPA Annual Operator Certification Report was submitted in January 2003. This report is an annual requirement of the Federal Register (Volume 64, Number 24, February 5, 1999) *Final Guidelines for Certification and Recertification of the Operators of Community and Nontransient Noncommunity Public Water Systems*. Copies of the USEPA Annual Report and USEPA approval letter were distributed to the council members.

WASTEWATER GUIDE
REVIEW

During the November 21, 2002 meeting, it was determined that a copy of the Wastewater Operators Guide to Preparing for Certification Examination produced by Water Environment Federation (WEF) in collaboration with Association of Boards of Certification would be purchased and reviewed. Bill Bahr, DEQ reviewed this document and provided a summary of his findings to Jenny Chambers. Jenny commented on the summary of his findings, which include the following: the manual is suitable for the 1C and 2C operators however would not be beneficially for the 3C and 4C operators. Anyone could go through and work the problems in the manual, but the textbook goes beyond what would be required for our 3C and 4C operators. It was determined to add this reference guide to the 1C and 2C study guides. The department will purchase another copy of the manual (current price \$67.00) for reference in the office and DEQ will contact the Montana Environmental Training Center to ensure they have an up-to-date reference library.

WASTEWATER EXAMS

The conversion to the ABC standardized exams has been finalized for the wastewater exams. The Exam Review Committee Members (John Camden, Bill Bahr, Ryan Leland, and Jenny Chambers) deferred three wastewater exam questions to the council for review. The questions were discussed and the only major comment was to determine if the word "irradiated" is included in the study guide material for the operators. This item will be added to the action item list and will be discussed at the next meeting. The Exam Review Committee requested that the council determine if it is still necessary to review the wastewater exams of applicants that scored between 65% and 69%. Steve made a motion to discontinue the review of wastewater exams and Joni seconded. The council voted and it was unanimous.

WATER EXAMS

Jenny Chambers stated that the water contract with Anderson-Montgomery Engineering is almost completed. The department is just waiting on legal review and signatures. Scott Anderson was present to discuss the plan in moving forward with the conversion

of our water exams to ABC exams. Scott distributed a tentative schedule for completion of the water exams and stated that the goal is to complete the revision of the study guides and exams a couple of months before the Spring Water School 2004. He indicated that the first step in the process will be to hold the Job Analysis Workshop to review the ABC developed needs-to-know and then add Montana specific items. He requested the council provide suggestions for group participates. The council and the other attendees provided the following names: John Camden, DEQ; Joni Emerick, Council Member and small system water operator; Lee Wolfe, Wolfe Water Management Systems, Helena; Shelley Nolan, Montana Rural Water Systems; Scott Emerick, City of Billings distribution; John Alston, City of Bozeman; Rick Cottingham, DEQ; Ryan Leland, DEQ; Eric Minneti, DEQ; and Leonard Willitt, City of Helena.

EXAM REPORT

Reta reported on the office exams administered since the November council meeting and the 2003 Spring School exams administered in seven locations (Billings, Kalispell, Miles City, Helena, Missoula, Great Falls and Havre). During the Spring Water School exams, the pass rate was approximately 65%.

WATER SCHOOL REPORT

The Spring Water Schools were held in two locations, Billings and Kalispell with exams administer in seven different locations. John Camden was present to report that the schools went well and that there were approximately 110 participants. John stated that the Fall Water School would be held in Bozeman on September 22 through September 25, 2003. The certification exam will be on September 26, 2003. The preliminary planning meetings will be held shortly with final agenda being completed in July.

REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

Ruby Miller indicated that she processed reimbursement packages that totaled \$38270.16. The total amount is lower than anticipated, but she thinks that with continuing marketing efforts the amount of money reimbursed will increase. As a marketing effort, Ruby stated that postcards would be sent out to further advertise the program and to remind qualified applicants to submit reimbursements request by June 30th to allow for fiscal year end closure. Ruby explained that the Operator Reimbursement database is not yet tied to the Oracle Operator Certification Program database. She anticipates that this will be completed shortly and in the meantime is tracking the allocated money in an Excel spreadsheet. Jenny informed the council that DEQ Information Technology Division personnel proposed to have the database completed by the end of fiscal year 2003.

Ruby discussed reimbursement problems like ensuring applicants are submitting receipts and that the reimbursement forms are completed properly. To address some of these problems the reimbursement forms will be reviewed and a possible checklist will be developed. The goal is to try and simplify the reimbursement process.

EXPENSE
REIMBURSEMENT
GRANT WORKPLAN
MODIFICATION

Jenny Chambers informed the council that due to the slow spending of reimbursement funds, the program was reviewed to determine possible ways to allocate the money to assist small water system operators. The Expense Reimbursement Grant Workplan was revised. The significant modification to the workplan involved the language regarding the pre-exam training contract. After review of the program and availability of potential clients to justify the work required for the procurement process it was determined this type of training is not needed. However, there is a need in Montana for training and the workplan has been modified to provide funds towards enhancing training programs and opportunities for small water systems operators serving fewer than 3,300 people in Montana. After completion of an internal DEQ review the workplan will be submitted to EPA for approval.

Renewal Update

Ashley Eichhorn stated that a total of 1534 renewal invoices for fiscal year 2004 were mailed on April 15, 2003. After Spring Water School and grading of exams, an additional 58 new renewal invoice notices were mailed. Ashley estimated that over half of the renewal fees have been received.

Compliance Status Report

The Operator Certification Program staff (Reta, Ashley, Ruby, and Jenny) reported that they are completing a thorough review/proofing of operator information in database and files. The process is going well and a lot of data is being cleaned up. The major finding is discovering Operators-in-Training (OT) that should have enough experience to become Fully Certified Operators. New experience voucher forms have been produced for these individuals and mailed out.

Reta Therriault handed out copies of the April 2003 Compliance Status Report showing a compliance rate of 98% for community, 97% for NTNC, and 97% for wastewater systems.

Enforcement

The issue regarding the operator in Billings that was sent to the Enforcement Division January 2002. It was determined that there was a breach in the operator duties that occurred and the past

practices were serious enough that the department will still proceed with a reprimand. The Enforcement Request was completed February 5, 2003 to request the department issue an Order of Reprimand with a one-year probation period. This Enforcement Request was approved and is being processed.

In February 2003, the Operator Certification was informed that a water treatment plant operator from Bozeman brought explosives into the water treatment plant. A complaint was filed and letter determined that the operator was arrested on the above charges. On March 4, 2003, an Enforcement Requests was prepared to take disciplinary action against the operator because this behavior does not exhibit the reasonable care and judgment required by the operator certification regulations. The Director denied this request stating that this was a personnel matter between the operator and the City of Bozeman and was not an accurate reflection of his abilities as an operator.

BUDGET REPORT

Jenny and Ruby distributed proposed fee increase comparisons. The fee increase comparison included six different potential plans. The council members and meeting attendees discussed whether OTs should be required to pay a renewal fee. Other professional training certifications do not charge a fee for individuals considered in training. This issue was addressed briefly and will be added to the next Advisory Council meeting. Ashley will prepare statistical information to compare OT numbers and out of state operators.

The council members and meeting attendees discussed all the plans and decided that Plan E was the best choice. This plan will subsidize water fees using federal funds by including the additional \$70,000.00 State Revolving Funds (FY01 reserve) in FY06. This plan will also proceed with a rule change to increase the Wastewater Operators annual renewal fees by \$10.00 in FY04. The motion for approval of this plan was made by Steve and seconded by Joni.

LEGAL OPINION REQUEST AND CONCERNS

Jim advised the council that a legal opinion request was submitted to the DEQ legal department concerning our authority/liability to certify tribal members operating tribal water and wastewater systems. This legal opinion also addressed certifying residents of other states who operate water supply or wastewater supply systems and who have no intention of working in Montana that request Montana certification. Jon Dillard indicated that he has spoken with John North, DEQ Chief Legal Council who has

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indicated that he has completed the legal opinion, but has not yet finalized his response report. Jon Dillard stated that at this time we can issues certificates to tribal members operating tribal water and wastewater systems, as well as, residents for other states.

DATE OF NEXT
MEETING
ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting will be September 25, 2003 in Bozeman.

Steve made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:20 and Joni seconded. The motion to adjourn was unanimous.